



**DECISION MEMO**  
**U.S. PRO CYCLING CHALLENGE BIKE RACE**  
**U.S. FOREST SERVICE**  
**REGION 2**

**SAN JUAN, UNCOMPAHGRE, GUNNISON, SAN ISABEL, WHITE RIVER,  
PIKE, AND ROOSEVELT NATIONAL FORESTS**

**CHAFFEE, GUNNISON, LA PLATA, DOLORES, SAN MIGUEL,  
MONTROSE, LAKE, PITKIN, EAGLE, PARK, TELLER, EL PASO, AND  
BOULDER COUNTIES, COLORADO**

**BACKGROUND**

The Colorado Department of Public Safety through the Colorado State Patrol has permitted Classic Bicycle Racing, LLC to use state highways for the seven day U.S. Pro Cycling Challenge bicycle race in late August 2012(see [www.usaprocyclingchallenge.com](http://www.usaprocyclingchallenge.com)). In addition to use of state highways, the race organizers have also received authorization by Gunnison County and Chaffee County to use about 30 miles of county road for the bike race.

There will be 7 competitive stages to the 683 mile race with the first stage beginning in Durango, Colorado on August 20<sup>th</sup> and the final stage of the race finishing in downtown Denver, Colorado on August 26<sup>th</sup>. Race organizers expect to have 120 to 130 professional riders participate in the seven day competition. Six of the seven race stages are on roads that pass through portions of seven National Forests (see Stage Maps). Only about 30 to 40 percent of the race route will pass through National Forest System (NFS) lands but the majority of major summits or passes the riders will traverse are surrounded by NFS lands. Those passes are Lizard Head Pass on Colorado Highway 145, Cottonwood Pass on County roads 209/306, Independence Pass on Colorado Highway 82, Tennessee Pass on U.S. Highway 24, Hoosier Pass on Colorado Highway 9, Wilkerson and Ute Passes on U.S. Highway 24.

The passes and the hill climb sections of the race are important because they tend to draw spectators to the more remote segments of the race course. Other than the stage starting points and stage finish locations, the mountain passes are the other locations where race organizers expect the public to gather to watch the race.

The race organizers (Classic Bicycle Racing, LLC) have the authorizations to use the state and county roadways for the purpose of racing bicycles and related support vehicle travel on those existing and established public roads. Laws, rules, and regulations pertaining to use of road and highway right-of-way areas and adjacent NFS lands by the public for parking, gathering, and even dispersed camping would remain in effect. The only exceptions the existing rules for dispersed camping would occur on NFS lands adjacent to the route on Independence Pass and near Lizard Head Pass where dispersed camping adjacent to the highway would be prohibited for two days preceding the race and the day of the race.



The Colorado State Patrol will be responsible for regulating public travel on the race route and access from side routes to those public roadways on race days. They will be assisted by race officials, Forest Service law enforcement personnel, and local sheriff and police department personnel. Closures and travel restrictions for public travel on the race route will be temporary and expected to last for a few hours each day along the race corridor. There are to be three exceptions where there would be longer duration closures to the public. One is on the Gunnison County road segment of Stage 3 up Cottonwood Pass. Access to the top of Cottonwood Pass would be provided from the Chaffee County side of the pass up County road 306 until a couple of hours before the riders pass through. Another is in Taylor Canyon where the road along the river from Almont, Colorado to near Taylor Reservoir would be closed to clear the roadway. And the other longer duration closure will be on State Highway 82 over Independence Pass for Stages 4 and 5. This closure will be done to clear the roadway and Pass parking areas of private vehicles.

The duration of use by the bicycle racers and the support vehicles associated with the race at any specific location along the race route is expected to be about one hour. Preceding the racers will be traffic control vehicles, film crews, and race officials and then following the racers will be support vehicles, more film crews, emergency service vehicles, and trailing traffic control officials who would remove and take down access barriers from the side roads or parking areas.

## DECISION

I have decided to authorize Classic Bicycle Racing LLC to temporarily use NFS lands along and adjacent to the U.S. Pro Cycling Challenge Race route for the placement of specific support facilities (e.g. portable toilets, trash receptacles, parking barriers, informational message boards (i.e. signs), road closure signs and temporary barriers) at key locations along the race route. I have also decided to authorize still photography and filming of the event as it passes through NFS lands. This authorization is for a one-time special group event that will use NFS lands and not involve more than five acres of land at any one of the key locations.

Classic Bicycle Racing LLC will be authorized to locate portable toilets and trash receptacles at several key locations on NFS lands several days in advance of the race and will be required to remove them within several days after the race. Those locations include Monarch Pass, an area near Taylor Park Reservoir, Cottonwood Pass, Independence Pass, Tennessee Pass, Hoosier Pass, Wilkerson Pass and Ute Pass as well as other appropriate locations along the route where local resource managers have determined a need to provide for additional sanitary facilities to accommodate expected increase public use.

This authorization will also include the placement of temporary sign boards, signs, and traffic control devices (e.g. barricades, cones, race officials, or signs) on NFS lands at side road access points along the race route. Existing parking areas will be used by the public, race organizers, and race officials at the passes and along the race route but may be barricaded or "roped off" to protect race riders from parked vehicles and spectators.

With this authorization I am aware of there are specific existing laws, regulations and rules regarding the use of NFS lands for parking along a designated roadways, dispersed camping



along designated routes, and public use of NFS lands. These existing laws, regulations and rules will continue to be in place and enforced.

The purpose of this authorization is to provide greater public safety, to further protect the NFS lands from unnecessary and undue resource damage, prevent unsanitary conditions, and provided needed visitor facilities in anticipation of above average public use at the key locations on NFS lands. All of the facilities and uses authorized by this decision are considered to be ancillary to the U.S. Pro Cycling Challenge Race which is an event that uses public roads and has been approved and permitted by the state and local governments.

## **CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION**

This action to authorize temporary use of NFS lands is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The specific category of actions cited here is identified in agency procedures as 36 CFR 220.6(e)(3) "Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land. Examples include but are not limited to: (ii) Approving the use of land for a one-time group event;" and (viii) "Approving the continued use of land where such use has not changed since authorized and no change in the physical environment of facilities are proposed." This authorization is consistent with those types of examples applicable to this category of excluded actions.

After considering the results of public scoping, the specifics of the action, and the anticipated level of impact which will result I have determined this authorization is consistent with the authority to exclude this action from further environmental documentation.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species – A biological evaluation (BE) has been prepared with the findings of "no effect" on federally listed threatened or endangered species and Regional sensitive species.
- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – The authorize to use NFS lands for ancillary facilities associated with the bicycle race will only affect areas already used for parking or vehicle travel. There is no expected new disturbance or new use of NFS lands that could be considered to be a flood plain, wetland, or municipal watershed.
- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas – All of the authorized actions will occur on or adjacent to existing roads and parking areas associated with state or local public roadways. None of these roads are within Congressionally designated wilderness, wilderness study areas or national recreation areas.
- Research natural areas – All of the authorized actions will occur on or adjacent to existing roads and parking areas associated with state or local public roadways. None of



these roads or areas are within Research natural areas.

- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – All of the authorized actions will occur on or adjacent to existing roads and parking areas associated with state or local public roadways. It was determined by Forest Service resource specialists that there was no need for cultural resources surveys because this lands have been previously been disturbed during the construction of the road or parking area and are currently being used for public travel. Any cultural resources are either destroyed or covered by semi-permanent surfacing.
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas – The routes over the mountain passes where this authorization provides for temporary uses of NFS lands have historical character in that most all were historic travel routes used either by Native American Indians, early settlers, miners or explorers. These authorizations would not affect the historical value of these pass areas to any greater degree than the existing uses already affect the historical values in the areas.

Internal scoping has identified concerns regarding increased visitor use along the race course and that there could be more demand for parking, camping, and visitor services than the race organizers will provide. I have considered these concerns and consulted with race organizers who have put similar bicycle racing events in other locations within the United States. Based on past experience, the organizers believe there will be spectators who gather at the mountain passes and feel the facilities that exist at these locations and the additional facilities and services that they would provide under this authorization would adequately handle anticipated spectators at these remote locations. The Forest Service rules and regulations related to parking and dispersed camping along designated roads is expected to provide adequate resource protection and there will be Forest Service personnel assigned to this event to provide for enforcement. Based on the experience of the race organizers in handling spectators and the remote locations of the NFS lands on these mountain passes, I believe the services and facilities to be provided by the race organizers to be adequate and commensurate with the expected levels of use.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the San Juan National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions. A letter was sent in early May 2012 to those interested parties or stakeholders identified by the various National Forest representatives for the Forest units affected by the bicycle race. The recipients were individuals or organizations and agencies that could potentially be affected by the Forest Services proposed actions or would have an interest in the authorizations for temporary use of NFS lands associated with the bicycle race. There were approximately 135 addressees that were sent scoping letters. There was no response to the letters nor were there any comments received by letter, phone call, or email within the 30-day comment period. After the public comment period ended the Forest Service received one email message regarding concerns about dispersed camping on Independence Pass and those concerns have been considered by local resource managers and some additional restrictions are being proposed for that area to address internal and stakeholder issues.



The race organizers have and will continue to release information on the race using various media outlets. The sponsors of the bicycle race and most communities along the race route have advertised the race so there is general public knowledge regarding the bicycle race. The race organizers have met directly with state and local government representatives as well as business leaders to coordinate activities, provide information and resolve issues at the local levels for race start and finish locations. The race organizers maintain an active and up to date website for the race with race details, dates, maps and other information.

## **FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS**

This decision is consistent with the National Forest Land Management Plans for all of the National Forests that will be affected by this action. The project was designed in conformance with existing uses and the Forest land management plan direction is consistent with those existing uses.

Requirements of the Endangered Species Act are addressed above under “Extraordinary Circumstances.”

Requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act are also addressed above under “Extraordinary Circumstances.”

Requirements of the Clean Water Act (as relates to floodplains, wetlands, waters of the United States) are met as none of these water resources are affected.

There is no effect on any population of disadvantaged peoples; requirements related to Environmental Justice are met.

There is no effect on handicapped or otherwise physically impaired people.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES**

In accordance with 36 CFR 220.6(e) this proposed action was subject to public notice, comment and administrative appeal. The Forest Service has not received any comments from the public on the proposed action within the 30-day comment period. With no comments received, there is no one eligible to appeal this decision pursuant to 36 CFR 215 regulations.

## **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

This decision may be implemented immediately. The uses and actions authorized by this decision will most likely begin to occur in late August 2012 several days prior to the race and end within several days after the race.

## **CONTACT**

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Gary S. Shellhorn, Special Projects Planner, GMUG National Forest, 2250 Highway 50, Delta, CO 81416. (970) 874-6666.



*Mark W. Stiles*

*6/15/2012*

Mark Stiles

Date

Forest Supervisor

San Juan National Forest

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